

DP-36

INGA SALLEN HAYEN
BIRTH DATE: 1922
INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 26, 1989
RUNNING TIME: 25:00
INTERVIEWER: ANDREW PHILLIPS
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: PORTERVILLE, CA
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1989
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 2/1996
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

SWEDEN, 1928
AGE 6
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

PHILLIPS: This is Andrew Phillips and I'm with Inga Hayen, H-A-Y-E-N, whose maiden name is Sallen, S-A-L-L-E--N. It's the, uh, 26th of May, 1989. It's about a quarter past seven on this Friday, Memorial Weekend. Could you tell me first where you immigrated from?

HAYEN: Well, we immigrated from Stockholm, Sweden, in 1928.

PHILLIPS: And what year were you born?

HAYEN: I was born in 1922, so I was six years old at the time we left Sweden for America.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Could you, what did your parents do? What did your father do for a living?

HAYEN: Well, my father did, had various jobs. He drove a truck

for a rather large company and, uh, he also, he was part of the Swedish brigade that went to Finland in the Revolution of 1917 to help the Finnish people during their war with certain segments of the Russian country.

PHILLIPS: Did he ever tell you much about those experiences?

HAYEN: Not really a lot. He and his brother went over there and, uh, it wasn't really a very good sight. He saw women there who were fighting, Russian women who were actually soldiers. And, uh, but after he came back, the way I understand it, he had difficulty getting work. It was almost as if he were blackballed in some way, and his brother encountered the same trouble. I think at that time there was a lot of Communism permeating Sweden and he just didn't care for the Communists. So my mother had a sister who lived in Santa Paula, California and she said, "Come over here. There's work here in America." And that's what my dad did. He preceded us by about a year and then after about a year then we came over and joined him. He got work--

PHILLIPS: Perhaps before you tell me about that, perhaps before you tell me about his immigrating and your immigrating to the United States, can you give us more of a sense of what it was like at your home in Sweden, your house, the kinds of things you did. What was it like for a young girl in Sweden?

HAYEN: Well, uh, we were, uh, we were really a lower income and, uh, we had, I remember living in an apartment, an upstairs apartment and, uh, there was a little hill beyond the apartment, and my brother and I used to go up to this hill and pick wild blueberries. And we'd bring some home in a can for my mother. And also there was a berry, we call it Lingenberry. It's like a small cranberry. And we pick that. And I can remember seeing people skating on the ice, and they had torches, like toolies. They must have been soaked in kerosene or something. You could see these bright lights weaving

around on the ice. I remember that. And also, um, going down the road I remember a very large and beautiful strawberry field. But we were told not to pick them, and we didn't. (She laughs.) And one time I had to test the ice to see if it was hard enough to stand on. Well, it wasn't. I broke through the ice, and my brother grabbed me and pulled me up. I really could have drowned. Another time, in the same area, it was in an area, the little place where we lived was called Alvik. Now, I understand that's a military place now of some sort. But we were watching this young fellow fish from, it was kind of a pier. I leaned over too far, and down I went. And I can still see that water. It appeared green to me. And this young fellow, I imagine he was maybe eighteen or twenty years old, he jumped in and got me out. And, uh, when my brother took me by the hand and marched me home, and my mother said, "Now, I told you to hang on to Alvar's hand." So I really wasn't given too much sympathy at that time.

PHILLIPS: Can you spell the name of the town you were born in?

HAYEN: The town I was born in, it's actually, it's called a Runtuna, R-U-N-T-U-N-A. Now, if that was the town, or the little province, I'm not sure. But I remember my mother saying something about a little town called Lindy, and how that's spelled I'm not sure. But Runtuna is where I was born. And I was born at home. And, uh, my brother was born in a hospital, but I was born at home.

PHILLIPS: How many were in your family?

HAYEN: There was just my mother and father and my brother Alvar and myself. Just the two of us.

PHILLIPS: What was your house like? Can you remember anything about that?

HAYEN: As far as the house was like, it was sparse, rather sparse. But I remember being very happy. I didn't seem to know that we didn't have a lot. But I think when you have a loving father and mother and a loving brother, that's all that really matters. And that's the way we were all the time we were growing up, we were a close, loving family.

PHILLIPS: So take us back then, to your father going away to Finland and fighting with the Finnish against the Russians, right?

HAYEN: Well, uh, all I know is what he's related. But he did have very, very, uh, lots of difficulty in finding work after that. And, uh, from what they told me, uh, two families moved into together, that way to kind of share expenses and share whatever they had with each other. And, uh, that's about all I know about that.

PHILLIPS: But that was the precipitous event which caused your father to seriously consider leaving Sweden?

HAYEN: I believe that was, yes. I really think so. Right.

PHILLIPS: So you went to school in Sweden before you left?

HAYEN: No. My brother went to school through the second grade, and I was too young. And then we came to America, he started right into the third grade, and I started in the first grade. I'd had no kindergarten like some of the children had. I went straight to the first grade.

PHILLIPS: Now, before we get to America, can you perhaps take us on that journey from your home to the boat across the Atlantic to the United States, give us a

sense of that.

HAYEN: Well, from the first, I remember there was a railroad station, and we were going to get on a train. And there was a small group of people there, women and men. And we were given bouquets of flowers. And there was a basket of fruit and, I think, nuts, something like that. And the men took my brother, who was eight years old at the time, and threw him up in the air three times and they'd say, "Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah." I think it was a sendoff of some sort. But my mother was crying because she was leaving everything that was familiar to her and she was going to a strange country. Even though she was to be with my dad, leaving her family and her friends and going into an unknown, she was afraid, and she was sad. And yet, on the other hand, she felt that it would be better for all of us, that we'd have a better opportunity here.

PHILLIPS: So tell us about the trip across the Atlantic.

HAYEN: Well, the trip--

PHILLIPS: Arriving at the boat, and--

HAYEN: Right. Well, I don't recall arriving on the boat, but I do remember that while I was on the boat I had an awfully good time playing around and so forth. But, uh, when we left Sweden, my brother, a week or two before had recovered from the measles. But lo and behold, I got them on the boat. So we moved from our regular cabin or stateroom or whatever, we were tourist class. We were moved to another room a little higher up somewhere. And I guess I was isolated or quarantined, so as the measles wouldn't spread around, you know. And so that's all I really remember about that until we get to Ellis Island. (She laughs.)

PHILLIPS: Okay. Until we get to Ellis Island. So now tell me about Ellis Island then. Tell us about arriving.

HAYEN: All right. Now, we arrived in the daylight and we arrived in May of 1928. And we had been cleared medically in Sweden before we left, and so we were to bypass Ellis Island. And my mother's uncle, who lived in New Jersey, was to come and get us and we were to spend a few days with him between sailings. But since I got the measles, I ended up at Ellis Island. And my brother and my mother stayed in a special place there. It was almost like a dormitory of some sort, I think, but when I saw it, I thought it was very nice, lovely carpeting on the floor, and very pleasant, I thought. This is a child's view, of course. But when I got to this hospital, the first thing that was done, I was placed in a stationary, or laundry tub. Not a regular bathtub, a laundry tub and put in hot water and bathed. And that water, I can remember, it was so hot. And I kept telling this lady, "Oh, de het, de het." But I guess they wanted it to be hot so my measles would break out good or something. And then I was taken to this room. I was the only one there in that room. But next to me was another room with another little girl in it, and there was just like a glass between us. It wasn't a wall. It was like a big glass, like a window. And that was my room. And I could stand on the bed and lean my elbow on a shelf and look right out into the hallway. And every now and then a clown would come by and he'd make funny little faces and he'd bounce a ball back and forth across the wall to entertain us. I was very well-treated there. They were really kind and good to me. Of course, that was my first experience in eating a fig newton cookie. And I tell you, I thought that was the most awful thing I'd ever tasted, and I wasn't sure if I was going to like America because I really didn't think I'd care for that food. But when they came with the oatmeal I gobbled that up. (She laughs.) And that was really my experience there. Now, when I was leaving, the day before I left, I asked the doctor who came to check me, about my mother. And I said, you know, "Mama," in Swedish, and he said, "Tomorrow. Tomorrow you'll see your mama." And I thought, well, tomorrow sounds like moron, so he must mean tomorrow.

Sure enough, the next day they got me all dressed and I was bathed again in a regular bathtub and dressed, and a little tag was put on me, and I was taken to an elevator and I went into the elevator, and when I came out there was this man. He looked like a worker, workman there. He had a wheelbarrow, and he gave me a ride in his wheelbarrow, and he took me over to where I was supposed to get in another elevator to join my mother and brother. And they really, they treated me really well. And I was never scared. I knew I was well taken care of. And that's the story of my stay at Ellis Island.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Tell me about leaving Ellis Island and entering the United States.

HAYEN: Well, we took another ship out of New York which sailed down and in through the Panama Canal, and then came up the Pacific Coast to San Pedro, Wilmington, I think it was. And I remember going through that canal. There were some little children on the sides and they were throwing walnuts at us. We were trying to catch walnuts. That's part of my memory. And in the dining room I had my first taste of grapefruit. Well, you can imagine how sour that tasted to me. And again I was a little bit leery of American food. But, uh, I enjoyed the trip. And when we docked, we got off the ship, and there was sort of a fence that you could see through, a chain-link fence. And my dad was there on the other side, waiting for us. And he used to tell me how bashful I was. I'd look down and I'd scrape my foot down. I'd look up at my dad, and he said, "Your big brown eyes were just looking at me." (She laughs.) And so we were reunited with my father. And from there we went to another aunt's home in Los Angeles and stayed there a day or two. And from there we went to Santa Paula where my dad had rented a little house for us to move into.

PHILLIPS: What was your father doing for a living at this point?

HAYEN: My father got a job as Santa Paula's city gardener. It was a very

fine job. He had the library grounds and other parks to take care of. The landscaping, the watering, the mowing, he planted flowers, tulips. He had another park he took care of out of town. It was kind of a rustic picnic area which he took care of. Plus he had extra jobs. He would do lawns and yard work for private people too. And the, um, he got a job also with the Methodist Church as custodian there, and my mother helped him with the inside work. So they both worked hard really all their lives, and they were well respected in the community. My brother and I did very well in school, and we were very happy.

PHILLIPS: Tell me a little bit about moving into school and learning another language.

HAYEN: Well, my brother did pretty well, but he had had the two years of Swedish school. (A dog barks in the background.)

PHILLIPS: We'll just start that again.

HAYEN: My brother had two years of school in Sweden, and he went directly into the third grade. But when he got into the fifth grade, there was something he was weak in. And so his teacher explained to my mother it would be better if he stayed in that class one more year, which he did. And my brother turned out to be a very fine educator. He got a master's degree from U.S.C., became a teacher in Bakersfield, a boy's counselor, and supervisor of seven junior high school. And so that extra year in the fifth grade paid off. (She laughs.) And I started in the first grade and, you know, I just sort of melted into the language. It was very easy for me. I made friends and I had my playmates. And actually I just lived across the street from the school, which was very handy. And, um, I loved, I loved reading. I would go to the library and bring book after book home and read and read. And I would go to the children's story hour on Saturday mornings, which were held at the library. So, um, I just gobbled up the reading and had no problem at all. In

fact, English and music and drama were my favorite subjects.

PHILLIPS: Okay. I don't know, it sounds, is there anything else that you think would be interesting for us? (Break in tape.)

HAYEN: I was always interested in music. In fact, Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald were a couple of my favorites. But I was so interested in music that I belonged to the girls glee club in high school, and I understood the band needed a French horn player and the music director, Mr. Payton [PH] Johnson, asked me if I wouldn't learn to play the French horn. And I said, "What?" And he says, "We have a brand new one. I need a French horn player. Inga, you know how to read music." I said, "Well, I'll give it a try." And I think a few days of instruction, I think it was around three weeks, I was put in the band. Of course, the French horn wasn't all that difficult. I just played after beats, like to give the beat, but I enjoyed it and marched in the band and went to band festivals. And I wa in plays in high school and operetta. And then when I went on to college it was a junior college. They're known as community colleges. I was in an operetta, The Fortune Teller. And I was in a capella choir, which I loved, and also women's trio. I sang alto. But music was my love. I never did much with it, because I wasn't all that good, but O blended in, and that's about it.

PHILLIPS: Would you like to play us something on your piano?

HAYEN: I am so rusty.

PHILLIPS: Perhaps a Swedish song of some kind.

HAYEN: I can give it a try. (Break in tape.) (Plays piano.) He's gonna cry. I think it hurts his ears. (Referring to her dog.) (plays piano.)

PHILLIPS: Perhaps you could tell us what the name of it is.

HAYEN: Uh, this is-- (Break in tape.) This is an old and rather familiar song that most Swedes can relate to. The name of it is "Ack Varmeland, Du Skona," which means "OH, Varmeland The Fairest." (Plays piano.)

PHILLIPS: Bravo. (Break in tape.)

HAYEN: I'll see if I can play this. (Break in tape.) Now, this is another Swedish song. The name is "Varindar Friska, Leka Och Hriska". It means "Spring's Breezes Playing." (Plays piano.)

PHILLIPS: Who wrote that music? Do you know?

HAYEN: This one? Oh, well the English adaptation is by Olga Paul, and it's arranged by Theodore Ganchau.

PHILLIPS: Is that both of them?

HAYEN: That's all that's listed here.

PHILLIPS: That's Spring Breezes Playing and the first one?

HAYEN: Oh, the first one was "Ack Varmeland, Du Skona," which is OH Varmeland The Fairest. The adaptation was also by Olga Paul and it was arranged by Theodore Ganchau.

PHILLIPS: Thank you. Okay, I think that brings us to a rather delightful close for Interview Number 410 [DP-36]. Thank you so much.